

Wellness Wednesday



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5 Easy Ways To Make Restaurant Takeout Food Healthier

Tips and tricks to make meals at home more nutritious during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the days before COVID-19, the concept of going out to eat always connoted a caloric splurge. Bring on the fats! The sodium! The sugary drinks and desserts! The carbiest of all the carbs! It's a special occasion and time to #treatyoself!

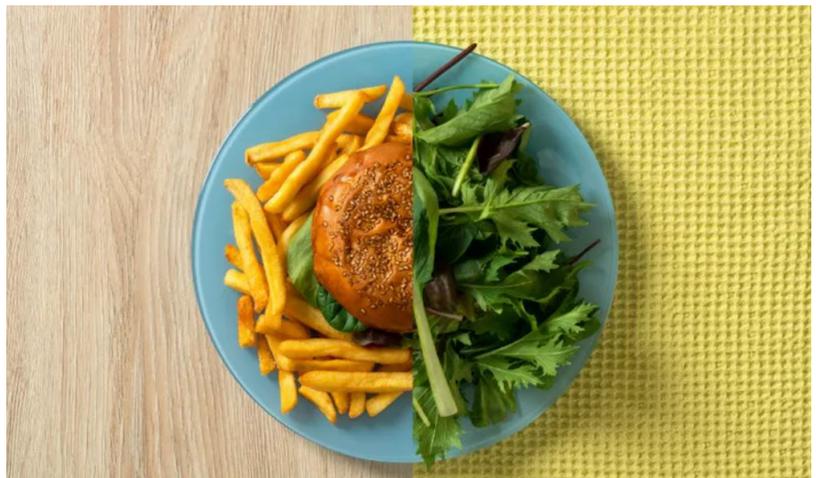
But today, it looks more than a little different. We're no longer just patronizing our favorite restaurants for the ambiance or environment. We're doing it to make sure those businesses survive this pandemic and will be there to welcome us again after it. We're getting more global cuisine — dishes we can't make at home, flavors we can't readily source or identify and food made with equipment not available in our kitchens. And while we still treat ourselves to special meals from our local "nice" restaurants, more often than not these days, we're having our meals made for us by our local shops because we're just plain tired.

However, in this new world where eating out often equates to ordering in, the old rules don't have to apply. Indulgent doesn't have to mean unhealthy, and modifications are no longer at the mercy of the chef. When you're bringing food home, you get to put your own thumbprint on the work of the pros; in fact, this freedom to be creative and increase the nutritional value of a meal has always been my favorite part of getting food to go.

With the help of registered dietitian Casey McCoy of Country Doctor Community Health Centers, we have tips for how to eat healthfully, mindfully and consciously no matter where your meal was first prepared.

Learn the magic 1:1:2 ratio

The first rule of healthy eating is to balance your nutrition, which also means creating an ideal proportion of food types. According to McCoy, an average ideal serving should have a 1:1:2 ratio of carbs, protein and vegetable side dishes. For instance, half of your plate ought to be filled with the good green stuff, while the rest should be divided evenly between meats and a starch, which may include grains, pasta, bread, potatoes or any other high-carb accompaniment.



When ordering for a group, just apply those same 1:1:2 proportions. For instance, on Italian night, choose one pasta dish, one meat entree, a big salad, and perhaps a vegetarian main or two vegetable sides for a group of four. Getting Asian food? Pick noodles or a rice entree, and either something where protein is the star plus two vegetable dishes, or two stir-fries that feature plenty of veggies and one more vegetarian one — including tofu as an option — for good measure.

Order family-style

When you're out to eat, you often default to one plate per person — you choose one menu item and that's your meal. But in many cultures, family-style is the way to go and at home, where you're already laying out the contents of your take-away bag, self-serve becomes simplified. After all, one of the most fun things about letting someone else do the cooking for you is variety. Plus, sharing dishes usually allows for greater balance; you're not tied down to finishing a heavy pasta entree by yourself, or eating only a meat-heavy entree with a vegetal contribution of just three miserly florets of broccoli.



"Eating family-style gives you the choice to balance your plate with a good ratio of protein, carbs, and veggies, and allows you to choose your portion sizes," McCoy explained.

You can also save money — and calories! — by estimating only three entrees per four people, with the option of adding in an appetizer. In the U.S., takeout portions tend to be generous; they're typically large enough for one and a half to two servings.

The same principle works for a meal for two when you choose one regular entree and a plant-heavy one. For instance, McCoy likes "going splitsies with a dining partner, so we can both enjoy our favorite fried chicken sandwich cut in half and also a nice salad."

"This can also be helpful to avoid getting over-full on large restaurant portions, and it makes it possible for you to enjoy your favorite items while creating better balance," she concluded.

Add nutritious ingredients from your fridge

Another way to cut costs and increase satiation? Add your own healthy ingredients. For example, split an Italian pasta portion into two and add your own zoodles to fill it in. Mix brown rice into your fried rice to up your whole grains and fiber, add an egg or two for cheap and easy protein, and throw in more vegetables to lower your simple carbs per scoop. Steam or lightly sauté vegetables to toss them with your saucy stir-fries, or grill some chicken and throw that in a vegetarian stir-fry.

Home-grilled chicken is a great add-in to your salad, too, as DIY lets you control the ratio of meat to greens. Obviously, it also provides a healthier style than breaded, fried or flat-top grill preparation, which can sometimes soak up a lot of oil. You can also throw chickpeas or black beans into salads for cheap protein and to bulk up your side salads.

Don't be afraid to customize your order

Go ahead — ask the restaurant to make it your way. Find out if you can get grilled chicken instead of fried whenever possible to cut down on fat and carbs. Request less oil or butter to be used when they're cooking to limit your intake and lower the greasy heaviness you might be sensitive to. Say you want more vegetables than noodles in your pasta, or simply offer to pay more to double your roughage. Have them pile on the lettuce, tomato, onion and other fresh toppings on sandwiches and burgers to get closer to that 2:1 vegetable-to-meat ratio. And ask if whole-grain bread on sandwiches is an option, since "higher fiber/nutrient content will keep you fuller longer and regulate your blood sugar," McCoy advised.

More likely than not, if the restaurant can fulfill a special request, they will, and sometimes at little to no extra cost.

Swap out fatty ingredients and replace them at home

Full-fat food tastes better. Fat is satiating, filling, and of course, flavorful since it's rich, which is why restaurants default to it. But if you're watching your intake, it's a good idea to have your takeout of choice omit certain ingredients, so you can make some healthier substitutions.

For instance, if you can't skip the cheese on your sandwich, pasta or burrito, ask them to leave it out and top your meal off with the reduced-fat version you may have in your fridge at home. However, you're going to want to go with the 2% as opposed to the fat-free. "You're more likely to eat more fat-free cheese since it's less filling. The 2% is much more satisfying and our bodies need fats, which can help prevent hunger and overeating later," McCoy said.

Another easy switch is Greek yogurt for sour cream on your Mexican food, again using 2% for a smoother taste and feel. Fage brand is particularly good for this — it's creamier and richer than competitors and doesn't break as easily. It can also work well as a sandwich spread in lieu of mayonnaise for sandwiches that only need a dab.

Rules to live by

Ultimately, anything you eat can be hacked for health if you follow the principles to which registered dietitians are held. McCoy's guidance boils down to this:

- Increase fiber intake from fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Reduce saturated fat intake by incorporating lean meats and plant-based proteins, and replacing fats like butter and coconut oil with unsaturated oils
- Include healthy fats like omega-3s, poly/mono-unsaturated fats from plant and seafood sources
- Cut down on sugar whenever possible
- Ensure adequate nutrient sufficiency with a variety of fruits and vegetables

So add on what you need and limit what you don't. And make every chef's special your special as you adapt it from their kitchen to yours.



CITRUS IMMUNITY WELL SHOT



25 Calories | *PREP TIME: 10 mins* | *COOK TIME: 0 mins* | *TOTAL TIME: 10 mins*
YIELD: 6 Servings | *COURSE: Drinks* | *CUISINE: American*

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium grapefruit, peeled
- 1 medium orange
- ½ medium lemon
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger root, peeled
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh turmeric root, peeled
- ½ clove garlic
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper

Make a fresh batch at least once a week. Have one shot in the morning and another later on to boost your afternoon! For an added boost of Vitamin C, throw in a red pepper and some fresh lime juice for a different flavor.

This super-simple-to-prepare Citrus Immunity Shot is made with immune-boosting citrus, turmeric, and garlic, a delicious way to start your day!

TIPS:

This wellness shot recipe nourishes, fuels and aids your body in the morning, and it's so easy to make. If you've ever purchased immunity shots in the store, you will know how expensive they are. Making them from scratch saves money!

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 shot about 2 oz, Calories: 25 kcal,
Carbohydrates: 6 g, Protein: 0.5 g, Sodium: 0.5 mg, Fiber:
1 g, Sugar: 4 g
Source: Skinnytaste.com



INSTRUCTIONS



How to make:

- 1.) In a blender, combine (whole) grapefruit, juice from the orange and lemon, ginger, turmeric, garlic and pepper.
- 2.) Blend until smooth (adjusting ingredients to taste, if necessary).
- 3.) Place a small sieve or strainer over a mason jar or glass cup.
- 4.) Pour liquid into strainer and serve immediately or store in refrigerator for up to 4 days

Grapefruit: Rich in Vitamin C and Vitamin A, two powerful vitamins that benefit immunity.

Lemon: A good source of Vitamin C, providing antiviral and antibacterial properties.

Orange: Also high in Vitamin C and it's high in beta-cryptoxanthin, a carotenoid that your body converts into Vitamin A.

Ginger: Contains gingerol, which can help lower the risk of infections and inhibit the growth of many different types of bacteria.

Turmeric: Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, is a powerful anti-inflammatory and a very strong antioxidant.

Black Pepper: When you add a little black pepper to your turmeric, and you increase the absorption of curcumin by almost 2000%!

Garlic: Enhances immune function and it contains sulphur compounds that get into the body through digestion and exert many medicinal effects.

FEATURED EXERCISE

10 Power Plyometric Leg Exercises You Need to Start Doing

Plyometric leg exercises up the ante on your current workout, allowing you to get more done in less time.



Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



GET IN TO THE HABIT
OF ASKING YOURSELF:
"DOES THIS SUPPORT
THE LIFE I'M TRYING
TO CREATE?"



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